

JANUARY 5, 1984

Had the holidays lasted three more days, the Shortgrass Country would have tripped its own tilt switch. Potato chips fried in whale blubber and hot tamales buttered on both sides of the shuck were going at such a fierce pace that the punch bowls were becoming off-flavored. Aprons were having to be sent back for refitting; home bartenders were being overrun worse than school bus drivers during the football season.

My big fall weight loss was erased and bypassed at the first station I hit that was mainlining coconut oil and free shooting whip cream over pecan pies. As I think I'd told you, I'd taken off four ounces of rib and waist tallow in August and September. At the first appetizer buffet I blew that loss and started on a rate of gain that'd make the star in a fat lady show think she'd become anemic. The sudden gain was so fast that I had to watch to keep from mashing someone with my shadow.

One place where I was oversensitive to the holiday spread was at the air terminals. Boarding clerks were all but weighing in their customers. I watched one in Dallas coloring out the seats on a 727. She was actually drawing the ones of us out of the squares that might overhang under the armrests and bulge over into the aisles.

When I caught on to what she was doing, I held my carry-on luggage up under my chins as tight as I could without cutting off my air supply. True to their policy, she asked if that was all I had to carry on board. Before I'd thought, I told her that the bulge she saw was from my necktie wadding up under my slipover sweater. Kids nowadays hit the ground being smart mouthed. Blue suits always have accentuated my size. She's lucky it was Christmas, or I'd have reported her to her superiors.

Commuter lines were even worse than the big planes. I caught a flight across a mountain range where weight was so critical they made me dump my pockets and sit in the center of the plane for ballast. In the seat pocket description of the plane, the wing spread in full flight was quoted at 10 ft. 7 inches. From the way that sounded I was relieved when we were over the peaks and out of the rimrocks. I was afraid that outfit might have a nest somewhere in the pinnacles.

It doesn't look like it's going to be too long before the food in the fast food places and hamburger joints becomes so tragic that we'll all be off our feed. No high stepping kid of an airline clerk is going to break my spirit. I'd sure like to trace that little place across the mountains on radar. Next thing we'll be hearing is that we have to pay an excursion fare for our luggage.